

**Amendments to the claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): An image processing device, comprising:

image data inputting means for inputting image data;

image data storing means for storing the image data inputted by the image data inputting means;

image data processing means for processing the image data stored in the image data storing means; and

image data invalidating means for performing invalidation of the image data stored in the image data storing means, the image processing device further comprising:

directing means for directing suspension of the invalidation performed by the image data invalidating means while the invalidation is being performed; and

permitting means for permitting the suspension of the invalidation being performed, in response to a request of the suspension of the invalidation by the directing means, after it is confirmed that a user who requested the suspension of the invalidation is a certified user,

wherein the invalidation is ~~normally prioritized over the processing of the image data, but the invalidation is suspended and the processing of the image data is performed if approved by the user requesting the suspension~~being performed cannot be suspended unless approved by the certified user.

Claim 2 (original): The image processing device as set forth in claim 1, wherein:

the image data invalidating means continues the invalidation until the suspension of the invalidation is permitted.

Claim 3 (original): The image processing device as set forth in claim 1, wherein:

the permitting means permits the suspension of the invalidation after obtaining approval by an administrator who administrates the image processing device.

Claim 4 (original): The image processing device as set forth in claim 1, wherein:

the permitting means permits the suspension of the invalidation by input of a key operator code.

Claim 5 (currently amended): An image processing method, comprising the steps of:

(a) storing image data and carrying out required image processing with respect to the image data thus stored; and

(b) performing invalidation of the image data thus processed so as to prevent reproduction of the image data;

(c) when request of suspension of the invalidation is made while the invalidation is being performed after the step (b) is started, carrying out identification of a user who made the request of the invalidation; and

(d) suspending the invalidation being performed after confirming that the user who made the request of the invalidation is a certified user,

wherein the invalidation is ~~normally prioritized over the processing of the image data, but the invalidation is suspended and the processing of the image data is performed if approved by the user requesting the suspension~~being performed cannot be suspended unless approved by the certified user.

Claim 6 (original): The image processing method as set forth in claim 5, wherein:

in the step (c), the identification of the user who made the request of the invalidation is carried out by input of a key operator code.